

Your Worry Time Plan

Printable worksheet · the interactive version lives at omnipsyche.org/therapyhomework



Name (optional) _____

Date _____

Why postponing beats suppressing

Worry is your brain trying to protect you by rehearsing problems. Suppressing it backfires (the famous white bear effect: try not to think of one), but **postponing is different from suppressing**. You are not saying "never." You are saying "later, at 5:30, I promise." The threat system accepts appointments.

Two other things happen. First, you discover that most worries, left alone for a few hours, deflate on their own; at 5:30 many of them are hard to even remember. Second, the worries that DO survive until worry time are usually the real ones, and they get better attention in a focused window than in an anxious all-day drip.

The only sorting question that matters

Take each worry on your list and ask one question: **"Is there something I can actually do about this in the next few days?"**

Yes makes it a solvable worry. Solvable worries are disguised to-do items; the treatment is a next action, not more thinking.

No makes it a hypothetical worry: the what-ifs, the maybes, other people's choices, the unfixable past, the unknowable future. The treatment for these is not solving (they cannot be solved) but changing your relationship to them: they attend worry time, and they learn to wait.

THE INVENTORY

1 First, empty the pockets. What are the worries circling you these days?

List them all, big and small, rational and embarrassing. Getting them out of your head and into writing is itself a proven anxiety reducer.

2 How much of your average day does worry currently take up?

A baseline to compare against in two weeks.



Barely any

Most of the day

THE SORT

3 Which of your worries are solvable, and what is the next physical action for each?

"Money" becomes "email the bank about a payment plan Tuesday." "Mom's health" becomes "book her checkup." Small next actions, not solutions.

4 Which are hypothetical: the what-ifs you cannot act on?

Write them plainly: "What if I get sick." "What if they leave." Naming them as hypothetical is not dismissing them; it is filing them where they belong, in the worry-time folder.

YOUR WORRY WINDOW

5 Design your worry window: what time, where, and for how long?

15 to 20 minutes, same time daily, a specific unremarkable spot (kitchen table, parked car). Not your bed, not within two hours of sleep. Early evening works for most people.

6 Write your postponing phrase: the exact sentence you will say when a worry shows up off-hours.

Keep it respectful, not dismissive; you are rescheduling the worry, not insulting it. For example: "Noted. You are on the list, and you have my full attention at 5:30." Then jot the worry down and return to what you were doing.

7 Last step: what will you do during the window, and what happens when the timer ends?

During: read the list, cross off anything that deflated, turn solvables into next actions, and let yourself genuinely worry about the rest; that is what the window is for. After: stand up, change rooms, and start a specific next activity. Name that activity now.

Bring this to your next session. What you wrote here is exactly the kind of material good sessions are made of. Repeat the exercise whenever it is useful; the value compounds.

Michael C. Shedrick, M.S., PLPC, NCC. This exercise is for educational and informational purposes only. It is not therapy, not a substitute for professional diagnosis or treatment, and completing it does not create a counselor-client relationship. If it was assigned by your treatment provider, bring it to them. If you are in crisis, call or text 988 (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline). Free mental health education and tools: omnipsyche.org